



What We Heard

Bylaw Modernization

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Introduction

NSSSA has been preparing a major overhaul of our governing document to reflect NSSSA's new realities.

Throughout the process, NSSSA worked with high school students, alumni, and community members to shape the proposal into a framework that will serve NSSSA for years to come.

Because bylaws directly affect NSSSA's operations and Members, it was important that those affected by these changes had opportunities to influence them.

This report aims to summarize the feedback received from our community and describe how that feedback is reflected in our proposed governing document.

Engagement Approach

Between March 2025 and March 2026, the Governance & Policy Planning Committee led the development of a revised, enhanced set of bylaws to replace NSSSA's governing document.

This committee consisted of alumni, high school students, conference participants, and NSSSA volunteers from across Nova Scotia.

The process included three phases of work, two of which have been completed.

Phase 1: Draft Development (COMPLETE)

- Formed Governance & Policy Planning Committee in March 2025
- Review of current bylaws.
- Environmental scan of relevant legislation and best practices.
- Draft bylaws development.

Phase 2: Engagement & Revision (COMPLETE)

- Developed engagement process.
- Stakeholder engagement (alumni, members, parents, advisors, community).
- Feedback analysis and revisions.

Phase 3: Approval & Reporting (IN-PROGRESS)

- Reporting to engagement participants.
- Bylaw recommendations endorsement by the Provincial Cabinet.
- Communication about the proposed changes.
- Tabling recommendations at the Annual General Meeting.

Purpose of this Report

This report summarizes the feedback received during our engagement process.

Its purpose is to transparently document the perspectives, ideas, suggestions and concerns expressed by community members and internal stakeholders.

This report contains a summary of the feedback received, how the feedback was implemented in the recommended bylaws (or not), and the rationale behind the inclusion/exclusion decision making process.

Engagement Methods

NSSSA's engagement methods during this process are based on the International Association for Public Participation [Spectrum of Engagement](#).

The Governance & Policy Planning Committee was formed to engage NSSSA's community by **collaborating** with internal and external stakeholders throughout the development process. Members of the committee provided direct feedback and suggestions throughout the process and collectively developed the proposal which was recommended to the Provincial Cabinet.

Once the draft document was finalized, we **consulted** with the community through a variety of formal and informal methods to seek feedback on the committee's discussions.

During the consultation phase, NSSSA utilized virtual focus groups and online feedback submissions to capture input from our community and internal groups.

While the committee collaborated in drafting the bylaws, feedback gathered during the consultation phase informed revisions but did not replace the committee's responsibility to make final recommendations.

Focus Groups

Three virtual focus group sessions were offered:

- **Two sessions** for provincial cabinet members, and
- **One session** open to any NSSSA community members.

In total, **20 unique participants** joined consultation sessions:

- **13** Provincial Cabinet members,
- **Two** advisors,
- **One** parent,
- **Four** regional cabinet or conference committee members.

Of the focus group participants, two identified as NSSSA alumni.

Online feedback

NSSSA accepted online feedback submissions until April 4, 2026.

One submission was received from an alumni community member.

Informal feedback

Members of the committee engaged in informal discussions with regional and provincial cabinet members, alumni, advisors, and members throughout the process and brought feedback to the Committee for consideration.

In total, 21 individuals were engaged (exclusive of informal conversations and Governance Committee members) through focus groups and online feedback submissions.

What we Heard

Purpose

- Remove province qualifier in the purpose statement.
- Some suggested removing “We believe” from the start. Others supported the language, citing implication that NSSSA is a grassroots family.
- The purpose should be shorter/simpler.
- The purpose should include a connection to the friendships that form at our events.

Membership

- Those consulted appreciated the new language regarding membership expulsion.

Elections

- A question was raised about the meaning of “protest” in election appeals.
- Retain an advisor signoff for election candidates.
- Past convention was that CC Co-Chairs; Presidential Trio were allowed to vote in elections.

PC Meetings

- Feedback on notice requirements for PC meetings reflected a balance between a desire for agility and a need for well-considered decision-making:
 - There may be a need to make quick decisions, necessitating 24-hour meeting notice.
 - There is value in taking time to consider emergent situations before deciding.
- Longer meeting notice will lead to higher turnout at PC meetings, aligns with industry and promotes access to Members.

Provincial Cabinet Composition

- With media relations moving to another committee, what would happen if there were no Vice-President, External? The media relations team plays a big part in NSSSA outreach. Could present challenges for voicing their work at Provincial Cabinet meetings.
- There should be past-vice-president roles similar to the past-president role, as these individuals hold a lot of knowledge.

AGM

- Quorum for general meetings should be a percentage, rather than a constant number.

Finance

- Stronger financial controls should be written into the bylaws or include consultation with the financial advisor.
- There should be a term limit for contracts.
- The bylaws should specify who can sign contracts on behalf of the organization.

How Feedback Was Used

Feedback Implemented

Feedback	Explanation of Changes
Remove Nova Scotia qualifier from the purpose statement.	Removed “across the province.”
The purpose statement should be shorter/simpler. The purpose statement should include the networking aspect of our events.	“Welcoming and inspiring programs” is replaced with “connection-driven initiatives.”
Questions raised about the meaning of the term “protest” in elections.	“Protest” is changed to “appeal.”
Feedback on notice requirements for PC meetings reflected a balance between a desire for agility and a need for well-considered decision-making: There may be a need to make quick decisions, necessitating 24-hour meeting notice. There is value in taking time to consider emergent situations before deciding.	Recommended meeting notice for Provincial Cabinet meetings is changed to four (4) days. Current state: 24 hours Previous recommendation: 7 days
Quorum for general (Members) meetings should be a percentage, not a constant.	Quorum for the Annual General Meeting is adjusted to the lesser of 40% or 150 voting Members. The Vice-President, Internal role is updated to have responsibility for maintaining a register of members to support percentage calculations. We believe quorum of 40 Members, including three per region and fifteen not serving on a cabinet or committee for Special General Meetings represents a minimum carrying capacity for the organization such that we would not want changes to be made by a lesser number of Members.

There should be a term limit for contracts.	Added four-year contract term limit, with no agreement allowed longer than 18 months before the start date.
Who can sign major contracts should be defined.	Updated to specify: “President, (Sr.) Treasurer, Provincial Advisor, and Responsible Director” are signatories following ratification by the Provincial Cabinet.

Feedback Not Implemented

Feedback	Explanation
Remove “we believe” from start of purpose statement.	In consultation sessions, the Provincial Cabinet appreciated the terminology, citing it evokes the collective, grassroots “family” environment NSSSA seeks to create.
Election candidates should receive approval from an advisor before running.	The Committee does not recommend this. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the Candidate’s regional advisor is not present at the AGM (necessitating signoff from another advisor), or if the Candidate is new to NSSSA, the control is rendered ineffective. 2. Candidates are given an opportunity for speeches and required to receive nomination signatures. This keeps the balance of power with students (Members) rather than adults.
Past convention was that CC Co-Chairs; Presidential Trio were allowed to vote in elections.	For consistency, the Committee recommends that only those who are Members of NSSSA by being a high school student have voting rights in elections and at General Meetings. These roles are not automatically excluded from voting in elections. Rather, it is dependant on whether the individual in the role is ordinarily a Member of NSSSA (by being in high school).
With media relations moving to another committee, what would happen if there were no Vice-President, External? The media relations team plays a big part in NSSSA outreach. Could present challenges for	The Committee acknowledges the challenges created by this change.

<p>voicing their work at Provincial Cabinet meetings, solvable by keeping this role on PC.</p>	<p>By opening Provincial Cabinet meetings to all Members, any Member (including volunteers) may attend and speak at meetings.</p> <p>The Committee’s recommendation to remove Media Relations, among other roles, from Provincial Cabinet is to ensure the balance of power remains with elected roles.</p>
<p>There should be past-vice-president roles similar to the past-president role, as these individuals hold a lot of knowledge.</p>	<p>The Committee agrees that past vice-presidents hold a wealth of knowledge.</p> <p>This was not implemented to keep the new bylaws as simple as possible, and keep our governance as streamlined as possible.</p> <p>The proposed bylaws do not preclude NSSSA from working with past vice-presidents as non-voting advisors.</p>
<p>Stronger financial controls should be written into the bylaws or include consultation with the financial advisor.</p>	<p>We recognize the importance of strong financial controls.</p> <p>Whereas bylaws are difficult to change, the Provincial Cabinet, working with the treasurer(s) and financial advisor are encouraged to implement financial controls through policies.</p>

Limitations

While participation included a range of perspectives, engagement was limited in scale and primarily involved individuals already active in NSSSA leadership.

Future engagement work should explore ways to reach more Members with lower awareness of NSSSA’s work.

Recognition

With great appreciation and gratitude, we acknowledge the contributions of the community members who supported these efforts.

To all those who participated, thank you for showing up and sharing your perspectives with us. Your contributions and knowledge have supported NSSSA in developing a governance framework which will serve the organization for years to come.